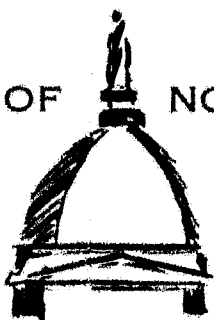


RELIGIOUS BULLETINVOL. XLIV, NO. 16
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1964REV. LLOYD W. TESKE, C.S.C.,
UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN - EDITORAUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE

"Authority" and "obedience" today are not popular words. The notion is sometimes conveyed that the spirit of aggiornamento, the spirit of Vatican II, is contributing to the breakdown of the concepts represented by these words. Emphasis on collegiality of the bishops is sometimes interpreted as a curtailment of the authority of the Pope. And popular references to freedom of conscience or "the liberty of the children of God" tend to abrogate the obligation of obedience to authority.

It is true that aggiornamento is throwing new light on authority and obedience, but they are in no danger of becoming archaic concepts. Recently Pope Paul VI in his weekly press conference is reported to have said with regard to authority:

".....everything here [in Vatican City] speaks of authority. The keys of St. Peter are everywhere. The very composition of this meeting [a papal audience] is evidence of the organic and hierarchic structure of the Church.

"The presence of the Pope, of the visible head of the Church, strengthens this impression, reminding everyone that there exists in the Church a supreme power which is a personal prerogative, having authority over the whole community gathered in the name of Christ.

"It is a power which is not only external but which is capable of creating or resolving inner obligations for consciences; one that is not left to optional election of the faithful but which is necessary for the structure of the Church and which does not derive from the Church but from Christ and God."

And recently Father Charles Davis, S.J., an English theologian whose enthusiasm for Council discussions of marriage, procreation, and family size hardly marks him as a conservative, wrote in America (November 7, 1964) on the subject of "A Catholic Obedience."

"Few words are as bandied about today as 'obedience.' It is well on the way to becoming the most abused word in the Christian vocabulary. Often the appeal to obedience is a thinly disguised, lazy substitute for answering questions and meeting reasonable if sometimes disturbing demands.....

"A great pity that at present we have no satirist to comment on abuses in the life of the Church. A theme worthy of such attention is the attitude of selective obedience. Alas, it is a weakness we all fall into at times, but those who find authority a useful sub-

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THE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF AUTHORITY We are living today in a period of rediscovery, says Fr. Yves Congar, O.P. in his most recent book, Power and Poverty in the Church* -- a period of rediscovery in breadth and depth of our own heritage in the Church. This, he says, is due above all to an investigation of four sources: Scripture, tradition, the Fathers, and the liturgy. In this return to the permanent sources of our faith, moreover, he says, we have begun the rediscovery of two realities particularly: that of the living God as active among us, and that of the community-ness of the faithful.

We are actually today, he says, returning to a pre-Constantinian situation in which it has become necessary for us to recover an evangelical way of exercising Church-authority. Authority in the early Church, he says, postulated on the part of the priest or prelate a dedication of self to a life lived in the charity of Christ, presupposed a total self-giving for the salvation of men. Authority today increasingly, he says, will have to recover the spiritual character of Church authority in the time of the Martyrs and the Fathers, and take as its aim the building up of the community-ness of Christian men.

Today, he says, authority often runs the risk of becoming "authority for its own sake," instead of being subordinated to a system of mutual love and service. "The exercise of authority in the Church today, of course," he says, "is for the most part marked by a predominance of pastoral care over prelacy, of tasks and respon-

sibilities over the claiming of privileges," and yet our concepts of authority are still too juridical, too remote from all that is interior and spiritual.

There still remain in the Church, for instance, he says, too many titles and insignia, too many elements of ceremonial borrowed from an age of imperial splendor. "Surely it is high time, and surely it would be to everyone's advantage, to shake off the dust of the Empire that has gathered since the days of Constantine."

In making these statements, he says, he has no desire to overthrow all authority. He wishes merely to state the problem, collect information that will throw light on the admitted facts, foster a healthy insistence on the truths of the Gospel in this sphere as in others.

For Christians in the future, in any case, he says, the attractions of the Church will not lie in ceremonial splendor so much as in the spiritual relationships founded on a genuine Gospel attitude of living faith, true prayer, and love and service.

--Claude L. Boehm

*Helicon, 1964, \$3.50

stitute for thought are especially prone. When a decree, law, or statement of the Holy See fits nicely with what is wanted, with the status quo, it is insisted upon with the utmost rigor; any violation or questioning is denounced in round terms as wilful disobedience and disloyalty to the Church. When on the other hand, some document, issued with the same or even greater force, does not fit in with preconceived ideas and would involve a change in policy, it is quietly overlooked, its prescriptions ignored..... Great maturity is needed to act prudently when a disobedient authority calls for obedience.

"All intelligent obedience requires discernment and, in that sense, selection, because there are always apparently conflicting demands. But the opposite of, and the remedy for, an arbitrarily selective obedience that cloaks personal prejudice and obstinacy is a truly Christian obedience.

"Fundamental to Christian obedience is that it is obedience within a community, and it is the communal nature of Christian faith and life that makes obedience such an essential virtue for every Christian. Faith is deeply personal, but we do not have it as individuals but only by sharing in the faith of a community. Our life in Christ, too, is a life with others. Obedience for the Christian is a willingness to believe and think his faith in union with the community, a readiness to conform his life to the action of the Spirit manifested in the community. It implies that he submits his personal ideas and desires to the test of reception by the community and does not refuse to learn from others within the community, correcting his own thinking and action accordingly. Included in this obedience is docility to the hierarchy divinely appointed to teach and rule the community. But only within a community context can this obedience to the hierarchy be understood. And only by recognizing the fundamental obligation of living and thinking with the whole Church can we act with Christian freedom toward fallible holders of local authority without falling into the license of individual caprice.

"Christian obedience on the ecclesial level is first and foremost obedience to the universal Church; it should be a truly Catholic obedience. Our primary loyalty is to the Church Catholic. Only on this basis do we give our response to particular local superiors, at least as far as inner obedience goes. External conformity is another matter and is often demanded when authority acts negatively or wrongly. External dissent is sometimes a duty, but sometimes out of place. Yet Christian obedience is essentially an inner obedience of mind and heart, and to reconcile its demands with the sins and failings of those in authority calls for some criterion of obedience. This criterion, I suggest, is to think and live with the whole body of the Church. If a Christian is sincerely and earnestly trying to conform his mind to the universal community, sensitive to every sign of the Spirit's action within it, anxious to submit his own ideas and strivings to a testing by the Church Catholic, he may rest tranquil in conscience when he has sadly to admit that his immediate superior is wrong and out of touch....."

For Freshmen Only.....

GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST

Is there a never-ending gnawing at the fiber of your soul? Is there a constant pressure pounding on your brain? Is your stomach nothing but a network of tight little knots bulging through the soft tissue? Do you feel like you're hauling the 'Rock of Gibraltar' on your back? Is there a five ton anchor dragging down your class work? Is there a tenseness running through your every pore that no tranquilizer can dissolve? No matter what escape hatch you open do you always end up staring at the same mountain? Is every waking minute of the day a ghoulish nightmare from which you can find no relief?

Problems faced alone have a way of taking on outlandish proportions. The constant and frantic wrestling in your soul only serves to spread the turmoil to every aspect of your life. Your perception becomes very narrow. You begin to view life through a pea-shooter -- everything is seen only in relation to your problem and not as it really is. In this state it is almost impossible to properly evaluate anything that concerns yourself.

Why not get your difficulties outside yourself? Why not share them with someone else? Share them with an understanding and sympathetic priest. He's someone whose vision isn't cramped. He's someone who understands the workings of human nature and the particular difficulties which are inseparable from college life. He won't criticize you. He won't laugh at you. He won't think less of you because you have a problem. He'll do just one thing -- he'll respect you as a unique person of tremendous worth, and he'll try desperately to understand the uniqueness that is you.

Here at school such men are as close and available as a cigarette machine but we can't jump feet-first into your very tender and sensitive soul. You must open the door. With the great variety of personalities available there must be one of us to whom you could open your aching heart and expose the anguish of your soul.

Why struggle alone? Your difficulty is half solved once you have gotten it off your chest. Crank up your courage. Give it a try. The mountain will turn into a mole-hill and that awful nightmare will fade in the light of real understanding.

ALL IT TAKES IS A WORD FROM YOU

-- Father Baker, C.S.C.

P.S. No matter how busy he is, an undertaker can never bury himself in his work.